

# Story of Grace Marshall's Long Imprisonment In Her Home on Eastern Shore

(Continued from First Page.)

of the house. Had not a doctor told her father twelve years ago she was insane? Why else had they locked her up?

Read this true story, that vies with the harrowing fiction of a Poe, and then determine.

## FARMER LIVES IN PROSPEROUS DISTRICT.

The Marshall farm is two miles distant from St. Michael's, a small Eastern Shore town, whose residents, in the main, follow fishing and truck growing, and lead an easy-going life. Fourteen miles away is Eastern, the county seat of Talbot county, which claims about 8,000 population.

Marshall's home stands well back from the public highway, a shell road over which automobiles and farmers' wagons pass almost every hour of the day. A long lane winds through the farm to his doorway. A treacherous, boldly printed on yellow cardboard, overtops the swinging gate which one must unlatch to enter the lane.

Back of the house is a river, plainly to be seen from the rear door. Around the farmer's domicile are flat, well-tilled acres; whatever may be Marshall's faults he is evidently not a sluggard. The premises are neat and there is no exterior sign of such squalor as the rescue party which reclaimed Grace Marshall found.

Two other farms are situated about a mile away on each side of the Marshall home. The entire country thereabout is attractive, even picturesque. Scarcely more than a mile away is the handsome country residence of former State Senator Richard Dodson, from whom Marshall rented, and who praised Marshall as a tenant.

Of the beautiful nature about her Grace Marshall had no view. The sight of the winding river even was denied. Her outlook was through a single window, which faced the lane up which few persons came, across a field, now bereft of its yield, she might peep through the shutter and see a couple of wheat stalks, and the woods beyond.

## Sun Never Brightened Her Prison Room

### Her Prison Room

The rising sun never brightened the room in which Grace Marshall existed. She might see only the sunset and the end of another day of dreariness and waiting. When she learns to talk again she may tell a graphic story of the opening in the window that faced always the coming of night.

When one enters solitary confinement the little things become events. Prisoners have counted over and over again the specks on the walls to keep the mind occupied. There is a single companion of a mouse or a cockroach; there is a story of a man who wept because of the death of a cricket which had brought into his cell another life.

These thoughts came as the writer saw that Mrs. Marshall had a few chickens and quacking geese. They pecked about in front of the house as the officers came to take Marshall to jail. How the papers of these fowls must have fascinated Grace Marshall in the days when her mind was less a blank and the world was not so utterly benumbed her interest in the world outside.

So much for the setting of this tragedy of the Eastern Shore. It was to the farm of Frank Marshall that John Hancock, of Wilmington, Del., came several weeks ago. Ostensibly he was on a hunting trip. Hancock is the uncle of Grace Marshall, the brother of the mother who died when Grace was a child. Somehow he had heard a hazy report that Grace was being neglected. The child he practically dropped to the ground. Since the death of Marshall's first wife her relatives have had little to do with him—and Grace had developed in the drifting apart process.

That is one of the strangest features of this story—the fact that the man, three years ago, took no interest in the existence of the girl.

**Never Heard Name Of Niece Mentioned**

Anyway, the uncle of Grace Marshall came at last to her prison. He stayed a day and night at the Marshall farm, but not once was the name of the incarcerated child-woman mentioned.

During the night John Hancock heard groans in a room near his own. They were not the groans of one in physical pain, but rather the despairing outcries of one suffering without hope. They disturbed John Hancock all night. When daylight came he crept out on the porch and saw the face of his brother-in-law's home, peered through the broken shutter of a window, and there saw his niece.

She was upon her hands and knees. Apparently she was picking up crumbs on the floor and conveying them jerkily to her mouth. She was eating. Except for two soiled and torn undergarments, she was without clothing. The flies buzzed about an emaciated form, but she appeared oblivious to their presence. Even through the closed blinds there came "swelling odors."

John Hancock ate breakfast without reference to his almost unbelievable discovery. On the ride to Eastern he wondered what to do to save the girl, and whether the law permitted an invasion of Marshall's home and the taking from him of his daughter. Hancock had consulted the local police force of Eastern. He told the cousin, Richard Thomas, of what he had seen. Then Hancock, having started the wheels of the law, went his way and left Thomas the duty of reporting the case to the authorities.

Thomas made the comparative recent establishment of the Talbot county of a branch of the Maryland Children's Aid Society, with Miss Emma L. Davies, who had had experience and great sympathy, in charge. Here was a chance to render "aid" of most needed kind.

Miss Davies should begin to tell the story here.

**Said Girl Had Died Years Before**

"When I started on my investigation," says Miss Davies, "I was told by a number of persons at St. Michael's that the object of my search was dead. Dr. Joe Seth, who had let the broken leg of Grace Marshall years before, said I was evidently working on an imaginary case as Marshall's daughter, according to his recollection, died eight or nine years ago."

"Nowhere did I find anyone who had knowledge of such a story as had been brought to me. I had difficulty in locating the Marshall farm, as I was informed there were several families of that name in the county. Finally located Frank Marshall's home and without revealing my mission asked if the family did not have an invalid daughter. Mrs. Marshall replied affirmatively.

"I would like to see her; I think I may do her some good," I said. "You cannot be of any help. It is too late for that," Mrs. Marshall answered. She informed me, however, that Grace Marshall was not wasting away.

"She is healthy and hearty; her mind is just gone, that's all," the way Mrs. Marshall explained it. She also told me that Grace never left her room as it was not safe to have her at large. "When I insisted upon seeing the girl, I was flatly refused by the stepmother. The excuse was that she excited Grace to see strangers. Mrs. Marshall further asserted that the girl hadn't an ache or a pain, and that 'it will be a great deal of trouble for me to show

her to you and I am not going to do it.' I went away disappointed, but determined to rescue Grace Marshall. The refusal of the stepmother to permit me to see or talk to Grace strengthened my conviction that she was the victim of most cruel treatment. I did not know how to proceed, however, in advance of the meeting of the grand jury, for which I waited.

"Meanwhile I saw John Hancock at Wilmington. He told me his story, and I asked him to testify before the grand jury, to which he agreed.

"For some reason the grand jury did not act. It is not necessary to comment on that, now that results have been achieved. An obstacle in my way was the divergence of opinion as to whether the law could interfere. There are laws to prohibit the cruel treatment of animals, but it seemed more difficult to get at parents who mistreat a child.

"The uncertainty about method of procedure cost time—that accounts for the delay in making the rescue of Grace. I had to work secretly, for fear the story might become neighborhood gossip, and reach the farmer and his wife, thereby frustrating our plans.

"Eventually I enlisted the aid of Attorney Fletcher Clarke and sued out a writ of habeas corpus. I went to the Marshall home again, and on my last visit I had a writ to insure my entrance.

"When Deputy Sheriff Gannon, Dr. Davidson, and Olan Morsey accompanied me to the farm on Friday of last week we found the door to Grace's room locked. Mrs. Marshall had a couple of keys, and after a while she finally opened the room.

"It was dark inside, so dark that Dr. Davidson and myself stood on the threshold until our eyes became accustomed to the change.

"At last we saw in the corner a rickety wooden bedstead. Huddled in its center, almost in the shape of a ball, was a human being. Several slats were missing, and the bed withal was a sort of tumble-down affair. Underneath Grace Marshall was a single mattress, about half-filled with straw. The straw mattress was approximately a foot and a half shorter than the bedstead.

"The bed clothing consisted of two so-called 'corpses'—a badly soiled. The girl had on only a suit of underwear. It, too, was well, as soiled.

**One Old Chair All the Furniture**

"In the room, an unimpressive eight-by-ten affair, was one old chair. That comprised the furniture.

"We asked Mrs. Marshall for the girl's clothing. She went into another room and brought an additional suit of underwear. I believe this was clean. She said the girl 'had no other clothes.'

"Well, I have brought clothing and we are going to take her to Eastern," I answered. We began to dress her. Grace knew enough to assist in putting them on. She merely nodded when we asked her if she wanted to go.

"Her flesh was cold, almost as cold as that of a corpse. There was no heat in the room, neither was there artificial light nor the means for making it.

"The room had one window. The blinds were closed, but the slats to one of the shutters were so drawn as to admit such light as she had. The odor of her prison place was foul. What else could be expected?

"We clothed Grace and bundled her up in blankets. Then we took her to the car. She sat in it in an automobile. She said nothing. She had said probably only a dozen words since we brought her to Eastern.

"I gave to Grace Marshall all the happiness to rejuvenate the girl both mentally and physically. I wish to correct the report that I said I would like to take her to my home. I am not inclined to the lynching spirit. I think those responsible for such cruelties should be punished by law, but my greatest desire now is this:

"To give to Grace Marshall all the happiness that belongs to her—life, light, food, friends; to restore to her the enjoyment of her heritage. I am glad to have been instrumental in restoring to her the life she has lost. The fact remains that she ceased to exist in the public mind more than a decade ago and was restored as a dead.

"This thought causes me to ask: 'What of Mrs. Marshall, her aunt, to whom we have taken her? This is the brief, tragic statement of Mrs. James:

**Aunt Thought She Was Being Cared For**

"You, I knew Grace was living. I thought she was getting the right sort of attention from her own father, and I never investigated. I was shocked when I found out the truth. I never dreamed such things could be."

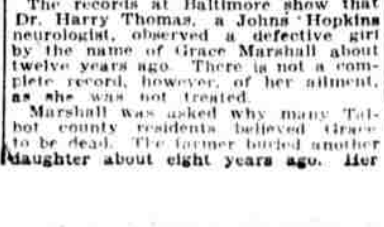
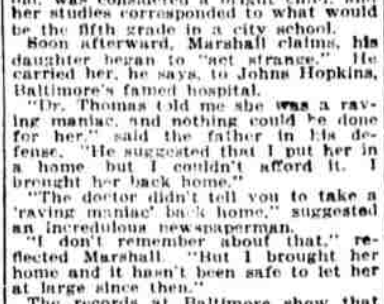
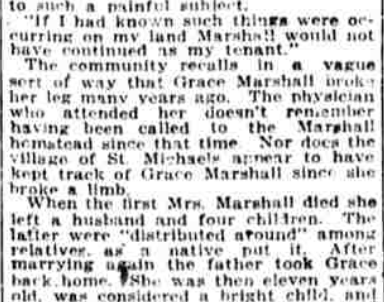
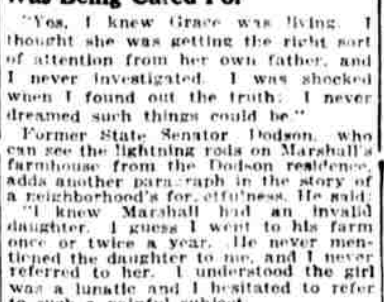
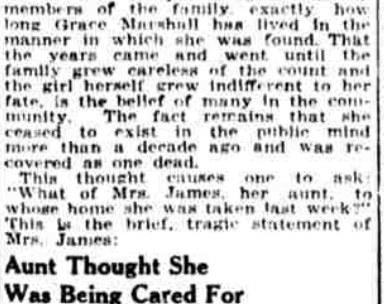
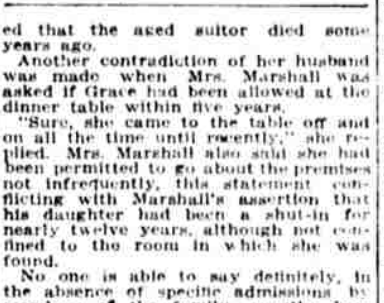
Former State Senator Dodson, who can see the lightning rods on Marshall's farm, has sent in the story of a neighborhood's fear of the girl. He said: "I know Marshall's father, and I know his daughter. I guess I went to his farm once or twice a year. He never mentioned the daughter to me, and I never knew she was there. So I was a lunatic and I hesitated to refer to such a painful subject."

"If I had known such things were occurring on my land Marshall would not have continued as my tenant."

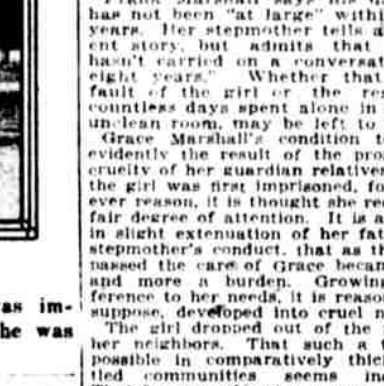
The community recalls in a vague sort of way that Grace Marshall broke her leg many years ago. The physician who attended her doesn't remember having been called to the Marshall home since that time. Nor does the village of St. Michael's appear to have kept track of Grace Marshall since she broke a limb.



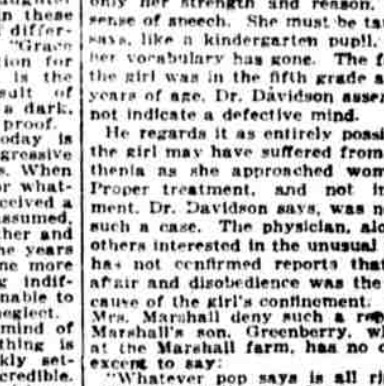
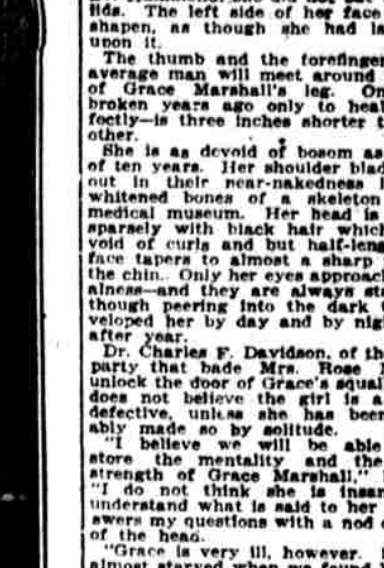
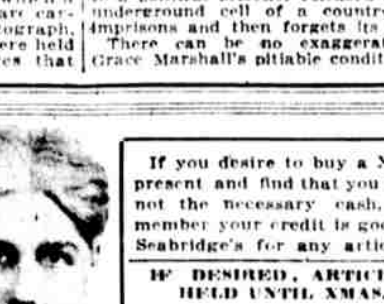
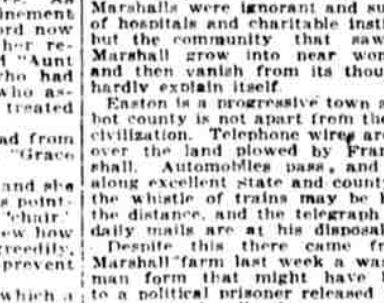
Above—MRS. ROSE MARSHALL, Grace's stepmother. Below—GREENBERRY MARSHALL, Grace's brother.



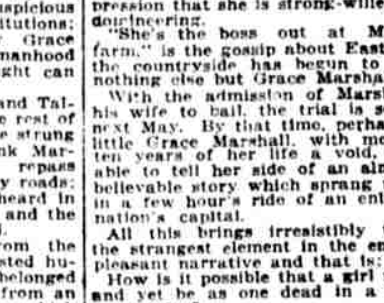
Above—GRACE, in a picture especially posed for The Times. Below—GRACE'S home near St. Michael's, Md., where she was imprisoned for years. The X-mark shows the room in which she was confined.



FRANK MARSHALL, Grace's Father.



GRACE MARSHALL, in a picture especially posed for The Times. Below—GRACE'S home near St. Michael's, Md., where she was imprisoned for years. The X-mark shows the room in which she was confined.



skin has lost its sensitiveness and it tight crawl across a stunted frame. It might not feel it when Dr. W. F. Hammond pricked her ear lobe to make a blood test she was unaware of the piercing needle.

She stares always away out into space. For ten minutes counted by Dr. Hammond, she did not bat the eye lids. The left side of her face is misshapen, as though she had lain long upon it.

The thumb and the forefinger of the average man will meet around the ear of Grace Marshall's leg. One leg broken years ago only to heal imperfectly—is three inches shorter than the other.

She is as devoid of bosom as a child of ten years. Her shoulder blades stick out in their near-nakedness like the whitened bones of a skeleton in the medical museum. Her head is covered sparsely with black hair which is devoid of curls and but half-length. The face tapers to almost a sharp point at the chin. Only her eyes approach nature's plan and they are always staring at though peering into the void. She is enveloped her by day and by night, year after year.

Dr. Charles F. Davidson, of the rescue party that bade Mrs. Rose Marshall unlock the door of Grace's squalid room does not believe the girl is a mental defective, unless she has been incurably made so by solitude.

"I believe we will be able to restore the mentality and the bodily strength of Grace Marshall," he said. "I do not think she is insane. She understands what is said to her and answers my questions with a nod or shake of the head."

"Grace is very ill, however. She was almost starved when we found her. Her teeth are undermined by decay. Her system is so far incapable of performing adequately the functions of digestion that she is practically without the sense of feeling; her skin has no acuteness."

"Solitary confinement means one of two things—the person so confined retains all of his faculties and senses, or, all of these faculties become benumbed and the victim lives. Grace Marshall has lived, but her faculties are benumbed."

The girl's woman, has a blood pressure of about 70. It should be more than 100. The coloring matter of the red corpuscles of the blood is slightly more than normal. Her heart rate is 90, and it should be 70. Her pulse is compressible; that is you may make it disappear by pressing upon it."

**Supervising Task Of Bringing Her Back**

Dr. Davidson is supervising the task of bringing back to Grace Marshall not only her strength and reason, but the sense of speech. She must be taught, he says, like a kindergarten pupil, because her vocabulary has gone. The fact that the girl was in the fifth grade at eleven years of age, Dr. Davidson asserts, does not indicate a defective mind.

He regards it as entirely possible that the girl may have suffered from neurasthenia as she approached womanhood. Proper treatment, and not imprisonment, Dr. Davidson says, was needed in such a case. The physician, along with others interested in the unusual tragedy, has not confirmed reports that a "love affair and disobedience were the original cause of the girl's confinement. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall deny such a report, and Marshall's brother, Greenberry, who lived at the Marshall farm, has no comment except to say:

"Whatever pop says is all right."

The Marshalls are farmers of the average type. Of the husband and wife, the latter appears to be the stronger character. Marshall is a water-worn, seemingly mild-mannered man, but his first wife's relatives have few kind words for him. The present Mrs. Marshall is a woman of a different type, and her impression that she is strong-willed. If not downrighting.

"She's the boss out at Marshall's farm," is the gossip about Eastern since the countryside has begun to talk of nothing but Grace Marshall and her story. With the admission of Marshall and his wife to bail, the trial is scheduled next May. By that time, perhaps, poor little "Grace" will be a woman with ten years of her life a void, may be able to tell her side of an almost unbelievable story which will arrange up a few hours' ride of an enlightened nation's capital.

All this brings irresistibly to mind the strangest element in the entire unpleasant narrative and that is:

How is it possible that a girl may live and yet be as one dead in a civilized community?

The most painstaking investigator may go to Eastern and St. Michael's, and he will come away without the answer.

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